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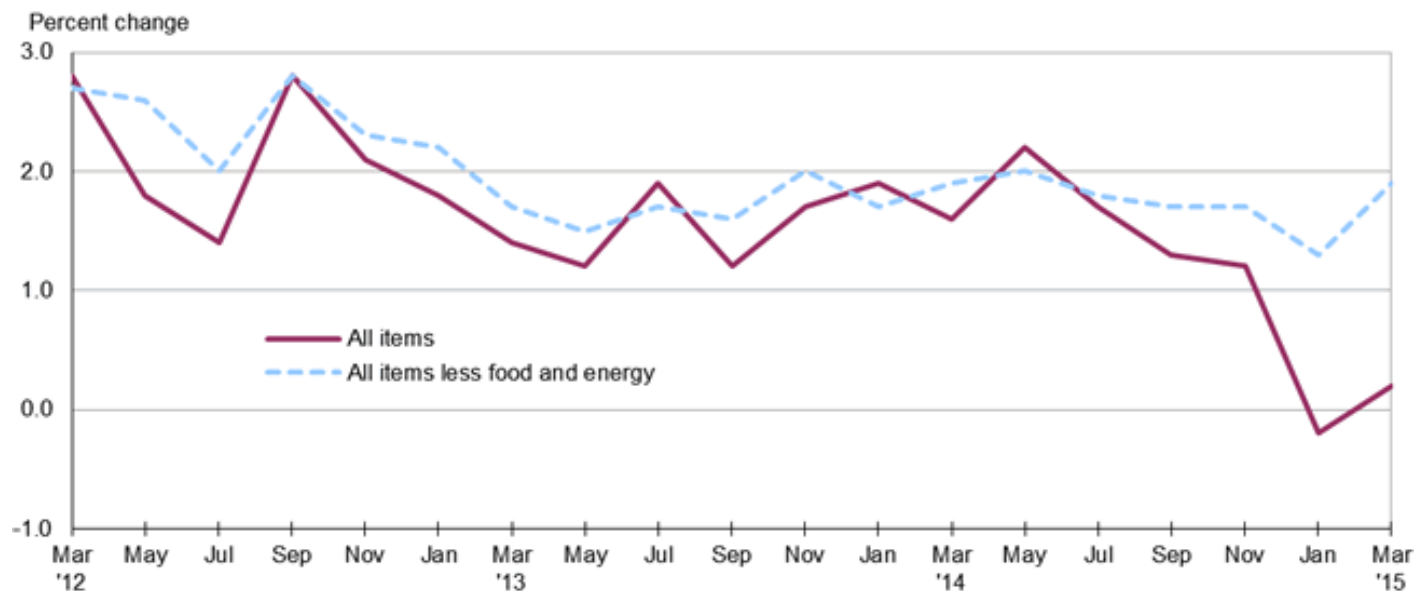
Consumer Price Index, Washington-Baltimore – March 2015

Area prices up 1.0 percent since January and 0.2 percent over the year

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for Washington-Baltimore increased 1.0 percent over the last two months, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Sheila Watkins noted the rise was the largest two-month increase in more than two years. The recent advance was led by a 1.2-percent increase in the all items less food and energy index. The energy index also rose since January, up 3.1 percent, while the food index declined 0.7 percent. (Data in this report are not seasonally adjusted. Accordingly, month-to-month changes may reflect the impact of seasonal influences.)

Over the last 12 months, the CPI-U edged up 0.2 percent, due almost entirely to a 1.9-percent rise in the all items less food and energy index. (See [chart 1](#) and [table A](#).) Since March 2014, the food index rose 1.8 percent, while the energy index dropped 18.8 percent. (See [table 1](#).)

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in CPI-U, Washington, D.C., March 2012–March 2015



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Food

After increasing 0.4 percent in January, the food index declined 0.7 percent over the last two months, as food at home prices decreased 1.4 percent. Within the food at home component, prices were lower for various items including canned fruits and vegetables, lettuce, and pork chops. Food away from home prices edged up 0.1 percent since January.

Food prices rose 1.8 percent over the year, as prices for both components also increased. Prices for food away from home advanced 2.9 percent and those for food at home increased 0.7 percent since last March.

Energy

The energy index, which includes prices for household and transportation fuels, rose 3.1 percent since January, led by a 7.8-percent advance in gasoline prices. Utility (piped) gas service prices were also higher over the last two months, up 2.7 percent, while electricity prices declined, down 1.6 percent.

Energy prices dropped 18.8 percent over the year, due largely to lower gasoline prices, down 29.9 percent. Utility (piped) gas service and electricity prices also declined since March 2014, down 13.4 and 2.0 percent, respectively.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy increased 1.2 percent since January. The advance was due mostly to a seasonal rise in apparel prices, up 12.2 percent—the index's largest bimonthly advance since September 2007. Also contributing to the overall increase were higher prices for shelter (0.6 percent) and medical care (2.9 percent). Moderating the rise in the all items less food and energy index were lower prices for other goods and services and recreation, down 0.5 and 0.2 percent, respectively.

Since March 2014, the index for all items less food and energy rose 1.9 percent. The advance was due largely to an over-the-year increase in shelter prices (2.8 percent), as the owners' equivalent rent of residences index was up 3.2 percent. Lower prices for household furnishings and operations (-1.4 percent) moderated the increase in the all items less food and energy index since last March.

Table A. Washington, D.C. CPI-U 2-month and 12-month percent changes, all items index, not seasonally adjusted

Month	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	2-month	12-month	2-month	12-month	2-month	12-month	2-month	12-month	2-month	12-month
January.....	1.0	2.3	0.4	2.7	0.1	1.8	0.4	1.9	-1.0	-0.2
March.....	1.2	3.0	1.3	2.8	0.9	1.4	0.6	1.6	1.0	0.2
May.....	1.0	3.9	0.1	1.8	-0.2	1.2	0.4	2.2		
July.....	0.1	4.1	-0.2	1.4	0.5	1.9	0.0	1.7		
September.....	-0.1	3.4	1.3	2.8	0.6	1.2	0.2	1.3		
November.....	-0.1	3.3	-0.7	2.1	-0.2	1.7	-0.4	1.2		

The Consumer Price Index for May 2015 is scheduled to be released on Thursday, June 18, 2015, at 8:30 a.m. (EDT).

Technical Note

The Consumer Price Index for Washington-Baltimore is published bi-monthly. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change in prices over time in a fixed market basket of goods and services. The Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes CPIs for two population groups: (1) a CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) which covers approximately 89 percent of the total population and (2) a CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) which covers approximately 28 percent of the total population. The CPI-U includes, in addition to wage earners and clerical workers, groups such as professional, managerial, and technical workers, the self-employed, short-term workers, the unemployed, and retirees and others not in the labor force.

The CPI is based on prices of food, clothing, shelter, and fuels, transportation fares, charges for doctors' and dentists' services, drugs, and the other goods and services that people buy for day-to-day living. Each month, prices are collected in 87 urban areas across the country from about 4,000 housing units and approximately 26,000 retail establishments--department stores, supermarkets, hospitals, filling stations, and other types of stores and service establishments. All taxes directly associated with the purchase and use of items are included in the index.

The index measures price changes from a designated reference date (1982-84) that equals 100.0. An increase of 16.5 percent, for example, is shown as 116.5. This change can also be expressed in dollars as follows: the price of a base period "market basket" of goods and services in the CPI has risen from \$10 in 1982-84 to \$11.65. For further details see the CPI home page on the Internet at www.bls.gov/cpi and the BLS Handbook of Methods, Chapter 17, The Consumer Price Index, available on the Internet at www.bls.gov/opub/hom/homch17_a.htm.

In calculating the index, price changes for the various items in each location are averaged together with weights that represent their importance in the spending of the appropriate population group. Local data are then combined to obtain a U.S. city average. Because the sample size of a local area is smaller, the local area index is subject to substantially more sampling and other measurement error than the national index. In addition, local indexes are not adjusted for seasonal influences. As a result, local area indexes show greater volatility than the national index, although their long-term trends are quite similar. **Note: Area indexes do not measure differences in the level of prices between cities; they only measure the average change in prices for each area since the base period.**

The **Washington-Baltimore, D.C.-Md.-Va.-W.Va., Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area** includes the District of Columbia; Baltimore City and the counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, and Washington in Maryland; the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Manassas, and Manassas Park and the counties of Arlington, Clarke, Culpeper, Fairfax, Fauquier, King George, Loudoun, Prince William, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Warren in Virginia; and the counties of Berkeley and Jefferson in West Virginia.

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Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Washington-Baltimore, D.C.-Md.-Va.-W.Va., (December 1997=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted)

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Jan. 2015	Feb. 2015	Mar. 2015	Mar. 2014	Jan. 2015	Feb. 2015
All items ⁽¹⁾		153.376		154.984	0.2	1.0	
Food and beverages ⁽¹⁾		155.668		154.709	1.7	-0.6	
Food ⁽¹⁾		157.109		156.010	1.8	-0.7	
Food at home.....		149.405	150.531	147.292	0.7	-1.4	-2.2
Food away from home ⁽²⁾		164.187		164.398	2.9	0.1	
Alcoholic beverages ⁽²⁾		135.694		136.199	1.4	0.4	
Housing ⁽¹⁾		166.015		166.786	1.8	0.5	
Shelter.....		176.982	177.416	178.005	2.8	0.6	0.3
Rent of primary residence ^{(1) (3)}		196.177	197.004	197.785	3.1	0.8	0.4
Owners' equivalent rent of residences ^{(3) (4)}		177.242	177.620	178.172	3.2	0.5	0.3
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence ^{(3) (4)}		177.235	177.628	178.173	3.3	0.5	0.3
Fuels and utilities.....		183.890		183.031	-3.6	-0.5	
Household energy.....		175.654	175.863	174.635	-5.7	-0.6	-0.7
Gas (piped) and electricity ⁽³⁾		168.177	168.091	167.108	-4.9	-0.6	-0.6
Electricity ⁽³⁾		175.746	177.763	172.946	-2.0	-1.6	-2.7
Utility (piped) gas service ⁽³⁾		127.168	121.756	130.633	-13.4	2.7	7.3
Household furnishings and operations.....		88.993		89.369	-1.4	0.4	
Apparel ⁽¹⁾		90.108		101.091	4.0	12.2	
Transportation ⁽¹⁾		138.558		142.206	-9.0	2.6	
Private transportation.....		135.993		139.711	-9.4	2.7	
Motor fuel.....		193.346	191.850	208.216	-29.8	7.7	8.5
Gasoline (all types).....		192.738	191.275	207.696	-29.9	7.8	8.6
Gasoline, unleaded regular ⁽⁵⁾		192.012	190.559	207.610	-30.7	8.1	8.9
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade ⁽⁵⁾		201.234	199.125	214.153	-27.5	6.4	7.5

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Washington-Baltimore, D.C.-Md.-Va.-W.Va., (December 1997=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted) - Continued

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Jan. 2015	Feb. 2015	Mar. 2015	Mar. 2014	Jan. 2015	Feb. 2015
Gasoline, unleaded premium ⁽⁵⁾		206.960	204.498	219.348	-26.3	6.0	7.3
Medical care ⁽¹⁾		171.895		176.951	2.8	2.9	
Recreation		118.808		118.589	1.3	-0.2	
Education and communication		147.470		147.572	2.5	0.1	
Other goods and services ⁽¹⁾		177.710		176.768	-0.4	-0.5	
Commodity and service group							
Commodities		124.852		126.714	-3.4	1.5	
Commodities less food and beverages		107.996		111.332	-6.8	3.1	
Nondurables less food and beverages		132.951		139.762	-9.0	5.1	
Durables		80.782		80.834	-3.1	0.1	
Services		172.529		173.948	2.2	0.8	
Special aggregate indexes							
All items less shelter		141.658		143.535	-1.2	1.3	
All items less medical care ⁽¹⁾		152.228		153.603	0.1	0.9	
Commodities less food		109.280		112.491	-6.4	2.9	
Nondurables		144.077		146.836	-3.5	1.9	
Nondurables less food		133.261		139.521	-8.2	4.7	
Services less rent of shelter		168.277		170.159	1.5	1.1	
Services less medical care services		172.721		173.677	2.2	0.6	
Energy ⁽¹⁾		182.812	182.298	188.531	-18.8	3.1	3.4
All items less energy		150.258		151.622	1.9	0.9	

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Washington-Baltimore, D.C.-Md.-Va.-W.Va., (December 1997=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted) - Continued

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Jan. 2015	Feb. 2015	Mar. 2015	Mar. 2014	Jan. 2015	Feb. 2015
All items less food and energy ⁽¹⁾		150.113		151.879	1.9	1.2	

(1) Indexes on a November 1996=100 base.

(2) Indexes on a November 1997=100 base.

(3) This index series was calculated using a Laspeyres estimator. All other item stratum index series were calculated using a geometric means estimator.

(4) This index series underwent a change in composition in January 2010. The expenditure class now includes weight from secondary residences, and has been re-titled "Owners' equivalent rent of residences." The item stratum "Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence" excludes secondary residences.

(5) Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.

Note: Index applies to a month as a whole, not to any specific date.